

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 14, 2012

The Honorable Secretary Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our serious concerns regarding budgetary cuts to small satellite programs such as Operationally Responsive Space (ORS) and the Space Development and Test Directorate in fiscal year 2013 (FY13).

The FY13 budget for the Department of Defense repeals the establishment of the ORS program office and eliminates already marginal investments in small satellite programs. Given the increasingly competitive environment in space and the high cost of procuring traditional, multi-billion dollar satellites, we fear these cuts are penny-wise and pound-foolish.

As you know, Congress recognizes the value of ORS and has consistently provided the necessary resources to ensure its successful operation. The most recent fiscal year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act House Report 112-078 noted the following:

“The House Armed Services Committee understands the ORS Office is pursuing a rapid response space works capability, as well as modular plug-and-play mission kits to enable a reconfigurable architecture and ultimately to demonstrate end-to-end solutions to support the U.S. Strategic Command vision of achieving a 6-day call up to launch. The committee continues to support these ORS activities.

“However, the committee notes that funding for the ORS program has decreased over the past few fiscal years... The committee believes a steady level of effort and funds are necessary to advance ORS capabilities so they become sufficiently mature to provide rapid support to the warfighter.”

Our military has become increasingly dependent on satellites for its daily operations. Global communications, intelligence collection, and guided munitions all rely on satellites which provide game-changing advantages on the battlefield. Yet, the FY13 budget proposal cuts the very programs that help enable these capabilities.

At a time when more than 60 nations are operating satellites worldwide and China is demonstrating anti-satellite technologies, the vision to develop, acquire, field and employ space technologies faster and at a lower cost is both strategically and fiscally responsible. We must cut federal spending but spending cuts should not come at the expense of proven technologies that are also intended to lower costs.

ORS and the Space Development and Test Directorate enable our military to reconstitute their capabilities should another satellite become inoperable and provide real tangible intelligence to our service members at both the tactical and strategic levels.

We urge you to sustain investments in these programs to help reign in rising costs and ensure our service members continue to have the unique advantages they possess on the battlefield.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMBORN
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Michael Donley, Secretary of the Air Force
General Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the Air Force